

REMARKS

In response to the Office action dated November 25, 2005, applicant provides the following remarks.

Claims 1, 5, and 8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Corbett, (US 4,225,989) in view of Chen (US 5,711,041). It is respectfully submitted that the Examiner has misread the primary Corbett reference. According to the Examiner Corbett "contains a plurality of fluid communication channels (28) between said first compartment and said second compartment, said fluid communication channels providing fluid communication between the first and second inflatable compartments to enable fluid in one of the first and second inflatable compartments to flow into the other of the first and second inflatable compartments." The Examiner previously identified the first and second inflatable compartments as "14" and "16" respectively. An examination of Corbett reveals that the actual layers are "10" and "12" (col. 2, lines 32-33). "14" and "16" are actually sheets defining the lower compartment "12".

More importantly, the apertures "28" in the Corbett reference do not connect the first and second compartments. A reading of Corbett reveals that such a connection (fluid communication) is physically impossible. (Apertures "28" actually are provided to allow the transverse tubes 24, 26 to alternately deflate. To accomplish this purpose they connect tubes 24, 26 to the atmosphere.)

Corbett is directed to what is called a "ripple bed". These beds have two sets parallel tubes which are alternately deflated and inflated cyclicly, the cycles of the two sets of tubes being out of phase "so that as one is being inflated the other is being

deflated." (col. 1, lines 15-18). Corbett points out that in such beds "Leakage of air from the top surface may also be provided to assist in cooling the patient and evaporating moisture." (col. 1, lines 21-23). As will become apparent, apertures "28" provide exactly such leakage of air from the top surface to the atmosphere.

The primary function of apertures "28" in Corbett is explained in the following passage from Corbett:

"The lateral and transverse tubes of the other passage, now that there is no longer the air supply to that passage, gradually deflate through the loss of air through the apertures 28. This alternate inflation and deflation of the two sets of transverse tubes produces a rippling effect, and prevents continuous pressure being applied to any one part of the body supported on the mattress. Because the **lower inflatable layer remains inflated throughout**, it will act to support a body on the mattress in the area of either of the air passages of the upper inflatable layer, if that layer should deflate to such an extent that sheet 18 bears on the sheet 16. A variable pressure reduction valve 45 **can be provided** in the branch 40 to enable the **firmness of the underlying support to be varied independently of the support provided by the upper layer.**" (col. 4, lines 36-51).

Note that the lower layer in Corbett remains inflated throughout the process.

If the apertures "28" in fact did connect the upper layer with the lower layer as suggested by the Examiner, the air from the lower layer would continually flow into the upper layer—**preventing the deflation of the transverse tubes, which is the whole purpose of Corbett.** A careful reading of Corbett reveals that it is not constructed in the manner suggested by the Examiner.

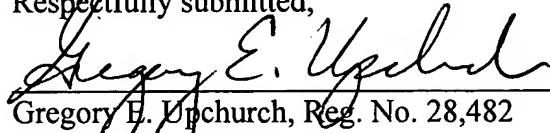
All of the rejections are based upon this erroneous reading of Corbett. The fluid communication channels of the present claims are completely absent from Corbett.

All the claims remaining in the case, claims 1, 3-14, 18 and 19, are therefore allowable.

The Director is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required by this paper to Deposit Account No. 08-3460.

Applicant respectfully requests that a Notice of Allowance of claims 1, 3-14 and 18-19 (all of the remaining claims pending in this case) be issued.

Respectfully submitted,



Gregory E. Upchurch, Reg. No. 28,482

Husch & Eppenberger

190 Carondelet Plaza, Suite 600

St. Louis, MO 63105

314-480-1854

Fax: 314-480-1505